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SUBJECT: SENEGAL: War and Banditry in the Casamance

#### SUMMARY

1. (SBU) In recent weeks, armed gunmen hijacked several transportation vehicles and robbed local businesses in Casamance. These attacks have resulted in several deaths and led the Senegalese military to reinforce their positions in the area north of Ziguinchor on the trans-Gambian highway. Attacks seem motivated by the rebellion's need to fund its logistical needs coupled with weaker command and control and a lack of political leadership within the MFDC (Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance). If the situation continues to deteriorate it could evolve from isolated acts of banditry to more generalized insecurity. End Summary.

#### Violent Banditry

2. (SBU) Acts of banditry have been common throughout the history of the rebellion in Casamance, but in recent years banditry had significantly diminished as the conflict lay dormant. However, during the month of June, seven major security incidents took place, ranging from passenger vehicle hijackings to extrajudicial execution. On June 7, gunmen opened fire on two vehicles in the area of Diouloulou (Gambian border) resulting in three deaths, one of the victims who was injured in the shooting was reportedly axed to death by the gunmen who were furious that his vehicle tried to drive through their roadblock. On June 9, armed gunmen executed Youssouf Sambou (aka Rambo), a former MFDC combatant who had become a mediator between MFDC and the GOS. An Embassy source indicated that a dissident MFDC group led by a war chief known as Famara from the northern MFDC branch of Diakaye is allegedly behind these attacks. He described them as "a solitary war group" (i.e. not in active coordination with the rest of the MFDC).

#### Logistical Problems

3. (SBU) Growing logistical difficulties are the apparent reason for the increasing in the number and intensity of attacks, according to an Embassy source. He noted that "the redeployment of the Senegalese army hampers movement of MFDC rebels and inhibits free conduct of their lucrative illicit activities." He also noted that Colonel Paul Ndiaye, the Senegalese Military Commander of Ziguinchor "has considerably reduced the trafficking of timber in which both MFDC rebels and Senegalese army personnel in Casamance were involved." The armed branch of MFDC, he concluded, is left with "cashew trafficking in the south for the Kassolol group, car hijacking and underground contributions paid by villagers in the north." As a result, there seems to be growing impatience and suspicion among younger combatants who wish to see change in their moderate leadership and do not hesitate to use more violence to express themselves.

#### Moderates Are Traitors

4. (SBU) Since the death in 2007 of its historical and charismatic leader Father Diamacoune, MFDC has become an uncoordinated gaggle of

separate armed groups without political leadership. The main armed group known as Kassolol, located in the south at the border with Guinea Bissau, is headed by Cesar Atoute Badiate, and has so far adopted a moderate line vis-à-vis the GOS. However, Cesar's leadership is questioned by younger combatants who push for change. It is reported to Embassy that the latter find that the moderate line has not yielded any tangible benefits except for their leaders who pocket the bribes provided by GOS, which has under President Abdoulaye Wade sought to buy peace without making any concession through negotiations.

15. (SBU) The Embassy's source indicated that this group of young combatants is working towards a "merger with combatants of Diakaye and Mahmouda in northern Casamance and even some elements of the radical group led by Salif Sadio." The unified command they envision could be led by Pascal Fangoure or Mamadou Niantang, two combatants from the North who are not among the most prominent and known military chiefs of the MFDC. Reportedly, this impatience with the moderates led in June to the execution of Youssouf Sambou (Rambo) by a group of young rebels when he tried to lecture and convince them to stop hijacking vehicles. They called him a traitor before shooting him dead. Rambo was allegedly one of the beneficiaries of a thirty million CFA (USD 60,000) gift donated by President Wade to the "wise men of the Casamance" who have helped to resolve the conflict.

What is Salif Sadio up to?

15. (SBU) According to an Embassy source the relationship between Gambian President Yaya Jammeh and radical MFDC leader Salif Sadio, who lives in the Gambia, has recently soured. Jammeh is apparently

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annoyed that Salif allegedly has evaded surveillance by Jammeh's men. It is also rumored that Salif may find in the new military leadership of Guinea Bissau a more sympathetic attitude. A source in the Casamance told Embassy that Naval Captain Zamora Induta, acting Chief of Staff of Guinea Bissau's armed forces, knows Salif well and their ties go back to the days when Ansoumana Mane led the Bissau-Guinean army rebellion in 1998 and Salif and his men joined forces with the Bissau-Guinean rebels. Induta was in the rebel's camp, while Senegal had chosen to send its army to support the Bissau-Guinean loyalists. The Embassy's source opined that Sadio might migrate back to southern Casamance and reoccupy his old stronghold of Baraka Mandioka. The Bissau-Guinean Army under the recently assassinated Chief of Staff, General Tagme Nawai, supported by Senegal, expelled him from his former headquarters and forced him to flee north to the Gambian border where President Jammeh has provided him sanctuary.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) The situation in Casamance has become volatile again. The conflict continues to persist as a result of a lack of leadership in both the MFDC and the GOS (there is no one in the government with a clear mandate and authority to negotiate an end to the conflict). Responding to MFDC's banditry, the Senegalese have reinforced their military presence and engaged in counter-insurgency efforts to win hearts and minds while neglecting to design a comprehensive political strategy to end the conflict. A relapse into violence could further isolate and impoverish the region which might become a hot bed of narcotics trafficking and a part of continuum of criminality between Guinea Bissau and Gambia.

SMITH